

U.S. Department of Education
2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [X] Title I [X] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Mrs. Julie C. Roy

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Avoyelles Public Charter School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 201 Longfellow Road

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Mansura State LA Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 71350-4292

County Avoyelles Parish

Telephone (318) 240-8285 Fax (318) 253-4198

Web site/URL http://www.apcs.us E-mail julieroy@apcs.us

Twitter Handle _____ Facebook Page _____ Google+ _____

YouTube/URL _____ Blog _____ Other Social Media Link _____

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Mrs. Julie Roy E-mail julieroy@apcs.us
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Avoyelles Public Charter School, Inc. Tel. (318) 240-8285

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mrs. Jeanette Dugas
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

Part I – Eligibility Certification

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 0 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 1 K-12 schools
- 1 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- ☐ Urban or large central city
 - ☐ Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
 - ☐ Suburban
 - ☐ Small city or town in a rural area
 - ☒ Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	30	26	56
1	21	35	56
2	31	26	57
3	30	24	54
4	26	28	54
5	28	30	58
6	21	34	55
7	20	37	57
8	21	26	47
9	28	38	66
10	20	41	61
11	30	31	61
12 or higher	21	31	52
Total Students	327	407	734

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 2 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 24 % Black or African American
 - 3 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 68 % White
 - 1 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 3%

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	1
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	18
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	19
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	721
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.026
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	3

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
0 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 50 %
Total number students who qualify: 367

8. Students receiving special education services: 3 %
24 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <u>1</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>3</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>4</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>13</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>2</u> Mental Retardation | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>1</u> Developmentally Delayed |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 16
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	3
Classroom teachers	27
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	12
Paraprofessionals	10
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 19:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	95%	96%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	96%	96%	96%	96%	96%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**
Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	46
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	89%
Enrolled in a community college	4%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	4%
Joined the military or other public service	2%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.
Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

In a safe, orderly, encouraging school environment, students will be guided in the development of character and learning potential in academically rigorous, content-rich educational programs. Through firm policies of discipline, and with parental and community involvement, the students will master essential academic and life skills to function in a global society.

16. For public schools only, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

APCS is a Type II Charter School. Students are chosen through a modified lottery system. This system allows for socio-economic as well as minority representation, as APCS strives to reflect the population of Avoyelles Parish as outlined in the desegregation order for the parish. From the first Saturday in January of the academic year to 30 days later, students in kindergarten and high school fill out an application for entrance into the school. Parents of potential students in grades 1st-8th call the school office and put their child(ren)'s name on a waiting list. All application names then go through a lottery system to finalize placement on the official waiting list. After the lottery is conducted, the students are granted entrance so as to reflect the socio-economic and minority averages of Avoyelles Parish. Parents receive notice from the school stating that the child has either been accepted or has been put on a waiting list. Once a child is a student of APCS, a letter of Intent to Return is sent home in December of each year to confirm that the family plans to continue enrollment for the upcoming school year.

PART III – SUMMARY

Avoyelles Public Charter School is a Type II Charter school; which is governed by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education of Louisiana. Avoyelles Public Charter School is located in Mansura, Louisiana (This township is in the center of the parish) and is attended by students from every rural township in Avoyelles, Rapides, Point Coupee, and St. Landry parishes. The majority of the families served by APCS live and work in rural townships and communities and come from agricultural/service backgrounds. According to the US Census Bureau reports (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/22000.html>), Avoyelles Public Charter School closely mirrors Avoyelles Parish in its race as well as socio-economic characteristics. The parish is 65.6% white (APCS is 68%), 29.5% black (APCS is 24%), 1.3% American Indian (APCS is 2%), 1.8% Hispanic (APCS is 3%) and 1.7% two or more races (APCS is 1%). The parish provides SNAP Benefits to 24.6% of Avoyelles Parish residents, while 21.4% of APCS students receive SNAP benefits. Avoyelles Public Charter School began as a dream for educators who were given the opportunity to create a new rigorous experimental learning environment for children. A school operated by teachers with teachers helping to make the decisions about curriculum, discipline policy, and unique instructional methods. A place where teachers teach and children learn. After five years of research and planning, the school began on August 28, 2000 in a new building which was funded by a loan from USDA Rural Development. The school opened with 240 students in grades K-5 and 150 on the waiting list. Then, eventually expanded to K-12 with 724 students currently enrolled.

The Avoyelles Public Charter School is a proponent of educating the whole child. Traditional core curriculum including reading, language, math, science and social studies as well as the arts, physical education, foreign languages, and technology are offered starting in kindergarten; strong emphasis is also placed on character building, service to others, and involvement in the community. All students are required to complete community service projects as a group at least once a year, character education concentrates on the core values of our founding fathers, and assignments are done on a minimum of four times a year to involve parents in the programs and projects done by the students. This is done in an effort to develop well-rounded citizens who will be able to compete in and serve a global society.

Our school has a large performing arts program. Students take part in theater performances, musical programs, and choir competitions on a regular basis. Many of our junior high and high school students take part in the state honor choir competition on an annual basis. In addition, the junior high and high school students take part in percussion and wind instrument bands.

Parents are a vital part of the success of Avoyelles Public Charter School. Parents volunteer a minimum of twenty hours a year. They help with classroom programs, theater, outdoor activities, and projects as well as attend parental involvement seminars and classroom discussions.

The teachers of Avoyelles Public Charter School are efficient, effective, and determined. They spend hours outside of the classroom on planning, research, and professional development activities that promote effective and divergent teaching. Teachers tutor after school on a voluntary basis, provide incentives and encouragement on a regular basis, and are devout about keeping parents abreast of what is happening in the life of their child. All teachers from Kindergarten through twelfth grade work cooperatively as a team and are constantly looking for ways to improve education. Lesson plans are meticulous and all instruction is taken seriously.

The leadership of Avoyelles Public Charter School is fervent about educating all students, and is supportive of all staff. The director demands perfection, yet rewards everyone from the bottom to the top for a job well done. The buy-in of teachers and parents is a direct result of her hard work, dedication to children, and educational expectations.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Avoyelles Public Charter School employs two main teaching models in the elementary (K-8) program: Direct Instruction and Core Knowledge.

Reading/English Language Arts: Direct Instruction is a research based program. Direct Instruction (DI) was authored by Siegfried Engelmann and focuses on effective instructional delivery and curriculum design. Guiding principles of Direct Instruction include the belief that every child can learn if carefully taught and that anyone can teach successfully when given effective programs and instructional delivery techniques. Thus, ultimately it is the teacher who is responsible for student learning. The goal of Direct Instruction is to “do more in less time”—accelerating student learning by carefully controlling the features of instruction. A typical Direct Instruction lesson includes: Explicit and carefully sequenced instruction provided by the teacher (a model of what students will do); scaffolding to provide students the assistance they need before being able to complete the task on their own (guided practice); frequent opportunities for students to practice skills (independent practice); and repeated practice over time (cumulative review). Research on the effectiveness of Direct Instruction (DI) has spanned over 40 years, consistently providing support for the assertion that all children can learn if provided with appropriate instruction. Direct Instruction is used in grades K-3 for reading, spelling, and language, and the direct instruction model of teaching is used throughout all subject areas in all classes. When the school first opened, there were at least eight groups of students in the remedial Direct Instruction Program (Corrective reading, Spelling through Morph graphs, and Corrective Math). For the past five years, there has been no need for the corrective programs, as all students are performing within two years of their targeted reading goals. In addition, the state requires every school to give the DIBELS (The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) to every K-3 grade student. The state uses “former” goals, but APCS uses the “recommended” goals. According to the state requirements for Kindergarten through third grade, over 93% of the Kindergarten through third grade students at APCS benchmarked this past year. In addition, for the past five years scores have not gone below the 82% mark for students benchmarking at the end of the school year; this is a direct result of the Direct Instruction reading, language, and spelling programs employed at APCS.

Mathematics: Avoyelles Public Charter School uses Saxon Math as the cornerstone of its mathematical instruction in grades K-8. Math practice is supplemented with Sadlier. The skeleton of what is taught in each grade is found in the Core Knowledge Sequence, and teachers write the curriculum lessons based on what every child needs to know at each specific level of instruction. The Saxon Math pedagogy allows for reinforcement, practice, and assessment of concepts throughout the entire year with its integrated and distributed structure. Content is articulated over time as a sequence of topics and performances that are logical and reflect, where appropriate, the hierarchical nature of the disciplinary content. This coherent structure ensures a deep mastery and thorough understanding of these focused concepts. (<https://www.SaxonMath.com>).

Science and Social Studies/history: Core Knowledge is used for teaching science and social studies in grades K-8 using a rigorous, lively and coherent education. Teachers use the Core Knowledge sequence to write the curriculum and implement topics on a monthly basis. According to the research (<https://coreknowledge.org>): The idea behind Core Knowledge is simple and powerful: knowledge builds on knowledge. The more you know, the more you are able to learn. This insight, well-established by cognitive science, has profound implications for teaching and learning. The most important goals for education—greater reading comprehension, the ability to think critically and solve problems, are a function of the depth and breadth of our knowledge. By outlining the precise content that every child should learn in language arts and literature, history and geography, mathematics, science, music, and the visual arts, the Core Knowledge curriculum represents a first-of-its kind effort to identify the foundational knowledge every child needs to reach these goals—and to teach it, grade-by-grade, year-by-year, in a coherent, age-appropriate sequence.

In addition to history and science, Core Knowledge is used to teach different genres of literature, common sayings all students should know, music, art, and character education.

APCS supports college and career readiness by constructing a graduation plan for child entering high school. Each plan follows the TOPS University Diploma Plan; that way if a student decides to follow a career path, he is still eligible to attend college should he change his mind in the future. In addition, all high school students are required to take the ACT test to ensure they are academically ready for college or career. The test is taken in the tenth grade, eleventh grade, and if needed, the twelfth grade.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

The goal of education at APCS is to guide students in the development of character and learning potential in academically rigorous, content-rich educational programs. These programs are Core Knowledge, Character Education, and Staff developed programs that address the whole child. Through firm policies of discipline, and with parental and community involvement, the students master essential academic and life skills to function in a global society. From Kindergarten through twelfth grade, students learn how to treat others, how to work together and work hard to accomplish a goal, the importance of determination and dedication to a task, the importance of cooperation and respect, and other life skills that are important in making a difference in the global society in which we live. As stated earlier, visual and performing arts are promoted and revered, and all students take part. For the past six years, the music department has won the Louisiana State Sweepstakes Trophy for music assessment, and numerous students take part in parish and district honor bands. Physical education and health begins in Kindergarten and goes through twelfth grade. Students take part in the Presidential Fitness Challenge and Play 60. Foreign language (in particular French) is taught beginning in Kindergarten and culminates in high school, where students take dual enrollment classes through universities. Technology is addressed through Project Lead the Way and the curricula not only teaches students computer literacy, but also teaches them to use the computer to advance math and science skills, drafting and design, and robotics. In fact, many junior high and high school students take part in state robotics competitions. Students in high school receive college credit for engineering classes under the dual enrollment program. In addition to traditional curricula, APCS also employs Character First programs to promote character education and help students build positive relationships with others.

The following data supports all instructional decisions made by the administration of APCS:
For the past three years, over 95% of students taking the ACT test scored an 18 or above, where the state average was 62%.

Juniors and seniors are allowed to participate in dual enrollment classes given through the Louisiana State University. According to the 2014-15 School Report Card, 84% of APCS students participated in dual enrollment classes, as compared to 28% of students in the state.

In addition, over 95% of APCS students have graduated compared to a state average of 75% and a national average of 81%.

After graduation, APCS has 88% of its students attending a 2-4 year college, compared to the state average of 59%.

In addition to required state testing, APCS students take part in the Louisiana Division IV District Literary Rally. For the past six years, students in high school have received the sweepstakes trophy. This means that APCS students scored the most first-place trophies at the event.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

The diverse and individual needs of students are met through direct instruction programs, cooperative learning situations, tiered instructional processes and small group instruction and intervention. All students in grades K-3 are grouped according to ability in reading and students must master one concept before moving to another. Teachers use the model-lead-test paradigm to ensure that all students understand the concept and master the skills before moving on. This gives each child a firm foundation to build upon as he progresses through school. If a struggling student does not respond to interventions provided by the teacher, the students is then tested by a diagnostic team to identify any learning problems and offer solutions:

whether 504 modifications, speech therapy or special education services. In addition to direct explicit instruction, students who need more help are given intervention in math and language arts on a regular basis. Small groups work with the teacher to review a needed skill or concept while others work on enrichment and acceleration. Throughout the day, teachers use differentiated instruction in the lessons by providing auditory, visual and kinesthetic instruction. Cooperative learning and problem solving techniques are used on a regular basis in science, history, and literature. Students must work together to form plans, solve real world issues, and conduct presentations for the class. Projects are assigned every quarter, giving students a hands-on approach to the content being studied as well as public speaking skills needed to present the project.

Eight paraprofessionals are employed to work with kindergarten through eighth grade students to assist with small group instruction as well as intervention.

4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

In order to ensure students are successful and maintaining high levels of achievement, APCS conducts formative as well as summative assessments on a regular basis. In reading, students are given mastery tests every five lessons, cumulative tests every 20 lessons and end of program tests at the end of every level of reading and language. Students are tested regularly for reading fluency as well as accuracy and comprehension through the use of timed reading passages. In math, students are tested every tenth lesson using cumulative assessments. In all subject areas, 85% of students must perform at 85% or above mastery or the skill is retaught and retested. In addition to classroom testing, students take part in state-mandated criterion referenced testing (LEAP) in ELA, math, science, and history. Students in K-3 take part in measurements of the acquisition of early literacy skills. DIBELS is designed to be short (one minute) fluency measures used to regularly monitor the development of early literacy and early reading skills.

Every spring, all students in grades K-10 are administered the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). This is a nationally normed standardized test used to give educators a diagnostic look at how their students are progressing in key academic areas. In addition, the test is used to continuously track students' growth. Test results are disaggregated and used to make academic and curricula decisions and to systematically improve instruction and student learning.

Finally, APCS gives curriculum- and standards-based educational and career planning tools that assess students' academic readiness for college (ACT, PLAN, EXPLORE). These assessments are given in eighth, ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade.

At present, there are no achievement gaps of ten or more percentage points between the test scores of all students and the test scores of any subgroup.

Parents and students are informed of school based assessments by the following: the parent portal of the student database (online grade book), weekly through test papers going home, bi-quarterly through progress reports, and quarterly through report cards. In addition, teachers phone parents anytime a student is not making academic gains. APCS has an open door policy; parents can call anytime they want to talk to the teachers or set up a meeting with teachers and the director.

APCS staff works diligently to ensure that the students are making positive academic progress. Teaching, testing and data drive the curriculum, and teachers collaborate on a regular basis to ensure that students are getting the best education possible. The State Department of Education takes all data and provides the school with a grade and report card each fall. These reports are shared with parents via the school web site. Since the inception of School Report Cards by the BESE Board, APCS has maintained an A rating for twelve years.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

APCS has a positive cheerful family oriented climate that is evidenced by well-manicured lawns, clean buildings and classrooms, professionally dressed staff and smiling faces. APCS is a safe haven for children. Positive character traits are demonstrated by the staff and expected from the students.

Discipline policies in place at APCS emphasize character traits such as honesty, trustworthiness, and dependability. Consistency in each classroom and across the grades is the strength of the discipline program. Students know what is expected of them. Students begin the day with the school pledge and the school song followed by the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a patriotic song. This sets the mood for the school for the day.

An environment of serving and caring for others is supported through classroom expectations as well as service projects. Service projects allow students to help someone less fortunate. The impact on students is phenomenal. They return with a grateful heart and empathy for others. Service projects include visiting the shut-ins of the parish, Veterans in the hospital, the homeless on the streets, the elderly in nursing homes, those in prisons, and children at deaf, blind, and special needs schools. These service projects remind the students of a world that needs their help and talents. It also gives them a heart for helping others and a vision to make a difference.

Teachers meet on a daily basis within the same grade level and on a weekly basis with the grades before and after. They discuss curriculum, students' needs, ideas for improvement, and concerns. Teachers then brainstorm and share ideas for improvement. Throughout the year, teachers meet with the director to discuss ideas or any problems. These ideas are discussed at length and changes are made as warranted. Teachers come early and stay late on a regular basis for intervention, staff development, and curricula adjustments. Their time is valued by the director; so, in turn, she does not require monthly staff meetings. Staff meetings and professional development meetings are held as needed and no time is wasted.

When test scores come in from the State Department of Education, all staff receives a check in the amount of the test score. This is a great motivator and reward for hard work. For example, this year our school performance score was 125.8, so every staff member, including janitorial staff, received a check for \$125.80.

Teachers are also shown they are valued by the director in other ways: she provides dinners and luncheons for them, gives monetary gifts at Christmas and for Teacher Appreciation Day, attends every classroom performance, visits the classrooms on a regular basis to show support, meets with parents and teachers to show support for teachers' decisions, encourages educational field trips at every grade level and provides teachers and students with "fun" days.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

Families are an integral part of the Avoyelles Public Charter School success. This school promotes family above all else and strives to meet the needs of each family represented here. Academically, parents are notified via text message, email, web site, telephone calls, notes home, personal meetings, and Open Houses. Parents get test papers home weekly, progress reports every four weeks, and report cards every nine weeks. If a child is not successful academically, emotionally, or socially, the parents are notified immediately and plans are made to rectify the situation. All concerns, whether academic or otherwise are addressed and parents are involved.

Families attend after-hours celebrations, presentations, programs, and achievement awards. We have regular Open Houses and Family Fun Times. For example, at Christmas time, Teachers act out popular Christmas books for the families and they come in their pajamas to enjoy stories, hot chocolate and socializing. In the spring, parents are invited to attend Jump Rope for Heart with the students to show

support for the American Heart Association. Throughout the year, each class has projects relating to studies in science and history. Parents complete projects with their children and these are exhibited at Open House.

In addition to projects and Open Houses, APCS sponsors drama productions, choir concerts, and plays. Each event is in the evening and lasts for several days so that all families have an opportunity to attend.

The community is also involved in the education of APCS students. Speakers come to meet with students about safety and social issues, such as drinking and driving, drug abuse, internet safety, and financial literacy. Local businesses sponsor students by providing food and supplies for the high school pre-prom seminars (class on proper etiquette of dating) and annual service projects done by each class. Colleges throughout the state come out for college day and speak to the students about career/college choices and provide information for students interested in attending. After college day, the local businesses provide our high school students with a Career Day. Students are allowed to go into the various businesses and shadow the employees. This helps them make decisions about future plans.

The community is very supportive of our school in athletics as well as academics. They regularly attend basketball games, cross country meets, and baseball/softball games. Local media comes to the school on a regular basis and provides great coverage of programs, projects, accomplishments, sports, etc.

3. Professional Development:

Professional development begins every year in the same manner: Teachers leave for the summer with a book to read. The book serves to inspire the teachers through self-reflection and personal growth, and a yearly theme is created from the reading. Teachers return to school in August with two full weeks to prepare for the students and work together on plans for the new year. The first week back is spent on group work and discussion as it relates to their summer reading. Teachers then take part in activities that “push on them” personally in order to deepen their understanding of themselves; which in turn deepens their understanding of humanity and students. After the time for personal reflection, the second week is spent discussing changes in policy, welcoming new staff members, reviewing spring test scores and viewing state mandated materials. Teachers also disaggregate data, plot individual student growth and plan the curriculum to meet the needs of all students. Professional development is based on the needs of the students and is data driven. Teachers in the same grade meet to revise the curriculum and write lesson plans to reflect the needed changes. Once this process is completed, grades meet together to ensure that what was taught in the previous grade and what will be taught in the upcoming grade introduces or solidifies what the current grade is teaching. This process is done in ELA, math, science and history.

Once the year begins, teachers in K-5 are coached on a regular basis by the curriculum coordinator and an outside consultant. This allows teachers an opportunity to receive individualized help and instruction in reading and ELA programs; teachers express concerns about the program and/or student mastery of concepts, and the consultant gives advice and models for the teacher. The consultant then meets with the school curriculum coordinator and the director to discuss needed changes as well as positive things being seen during her visit. After the exit letter is written, all teachers meet with the administrators to discuss the outcome of the visit. During this meeting, teachers share ideas of what is working; these professional development activities “teach” the teachers to become more successful. Having a peer teacher as the instructor encourages the staff, validates their sense of worth, and encourages buy-in to change.

In addition to monthly meetings in ELA and reading, teachers of math, science and history meet on a monthly basis to discuss ideas and needed changes to the programs. Again, teachers instruct one another, share ideas that are working, and brainstorm to address issues that arise while instructing students.

Professional development is success because it is focused and student-driven. Professional development has purpose and time is never wasted.

4. School Leadership:

The philosophy of the leadership is the basis for the school mission: educate the whole child (academically, emotionally, and socially). Although the school has three administrators, they are quick to remind you that they are first and foremost teachers. They love children and work to ensure that they are successful.

The director is the leader of the school in all aspects. She leads by example and has high expectations for herself, her staff, and her students. She is a firm believer in working hard, yet does not believe in wasting time. This philosophy and mindset encourages the staff and relays a sense of worth. The director expects the staff to come early, stay late if needed, and give their all; yet, at the same time, she never meets with the staff for the sake of fulfilling an agenda or have a sign-in sheet logged.

As the director (and superintendent of the school--Type II Charter schools are one district), she takes her job to heart. She meets with teachers daily to discuss curriculum, student needs, teacher needs, etc. She makes time for students who are in need of intervention, support, discipline, or a shoulder to cry on, and will spend hours with parents who want answers or need guidance. She is the first one to provide conflict resolution and the last one to take credit for a job well done. The director of the school founded the school and every decision made is for students' well-being.

The Assistant Director helps with curriculum coordination. She meets with teachers on a monthly basis, coaches teachers in reading and math, and teaches students when teachers are out sick. She provides teachers with support, ideas for activities in the classroom, and supplemental materials to enhance learning.

The Dean of Students is responsible for teachers and students at the high school level. She visits classrooms to help teachers and students, opens her door to parents on a daily basis, and attends all high school functions. She is determined and her main objective is student success.

The teachers at APCS look to the administration for example, and find in them the same values teachers are asked to give. They have determination, tenacity, a work ethic, and love for children. When leadership is willing to go the extra mile, then teachers are willing to follow.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The one concept that makes APCS successful is the involvement of the heart in all aspects of the school. It starts with the interview process of potential employees. Before credentials are examined, an interview is conducted to learn the heart of the candidate; to determine whether or not they will love a child enough to invest their time and talents to make a difference and inspire them to reach their potential. APCS has faculty and staff with heart which truly sets the tone for the school. Inspired teachers cultivate thoughtful, compassionate and willful learners that embrace life-long learning.

The motto of APCS is derived from the Socratic Method...engage the mind and move the heart. We believe that in today's world the phrase should be reversed as we must move students' hearts before we can truly engage their minds. Once a student's heart is moved, they become thoughtful, compassionate, willful learners that are motivated to apply knowledge, explore a meaningful life, and be inspired to impact the world in a positive way.